The municipality of Santa Maria in the province of Laguna, Philippines has a total population of 32,490 among 25 villages. With a sprawling land mass and a diverse geography from highlands to lowlands, Santa Maris is ideally suited for producing a variety of crops ranging from rice to citrus. Because the major economic driver is agriculture, most of the high-paying jobs are for agriculturalists, soil technologist and skilled farmers. Using traditional farming techniques, locals are now harvesting, coconuts, bananas, coffee, rice and many fruit bearing trees. To celebrate the harvest, Marilag Festival is observed and celebrated in an annual thanksgiving feast. Festivities include costume parades, contests, Filipino games, product exhibitions and other special activities.

On average, 20 typhoons enter the Philippine area annually from June to September, making many areas in the country highly vulnerable to flooding. Santa Maria is among one of the most flood-prone municipalities of the Philippines. Located in a catchment basin where three major tributaries converge, most of the residential houses and commercial buildings are located in the lowlands. During typhoons, most of the villages experience flood heights of up to 2 meters and the local government frequently declares a state of calamity during extreme typhoons. Flooding also severely affects the agricultural business, such as low harvest of rice and other products, disrupts the income most people and causes increasing financial hardship.

Safe drinking water is available in bottles but is unaffordable for many residents. Those who cannot afford bottled water get their drinking water from springs and deep wells. In upland areas, people travel at least 30 minutes to gather water from the wells and springs. Flooding causes contaminants and sediment from runoff to invade the springs and wells, thereby further decreasing the water quality and increases cases of diarrhea among children.
"I buy bottled water in school whenever I have no more water in my jug. I spend about 25 pesos (.50 cents US) a week, which is a big amount for me because we don’t have much. I have no choice because there is no safe water available here. I wish I could just spend it for school materials."

-Ashlee T. Macmac, sixth grade student
Coralan Elementary School is located in Coralan Village, a rural Laguna, Philippines town. Most of the 770 families that make this community home earn a living from farming and live below poverty line. The local water district pressure is low, making access to safe drinking water difficult. Stomach aches are often experienced by children when they are in school.

Teachers here, like most in other schools, are buying bottled water with their own money just to help students with safe drinking water access. Teachers talk about the existing water source and how it is not really safe for drinking but have limited options and resources. The poverty situation makes it too expensive for most people living in the village to buy bottled water, so they suffer the consequences for simply quenching their thirst. With a diarrhea monitoring program in place, they frequently report a large number of diarrhea patients who are sick from waterborne diseases.

During rainy season, the school is often surrounded by flood water, and school attendance is significantly reduced. The Village is requesting assistance from the Government to modify the elevation of road leading to the school, but no budget for this project has been provided. An AquaTower here will have a big impact for the students and the community.
Planet Water Foundation is a U.S.-based non-profit that develops strategic partnerships that support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts that align with four of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Quality Education; Gender Equality; Reduced Inequalities; and Clean Water and Sanitation. Project 24 programs and initiatives support these four SDGs with longitudinal support in each community for five years.

Since 2015, Project 24 is Planet Water Foundation’s World Water Day advocacy and engagement platform that focuses on the world’s critical need to bring an end to water poverty.

“Our children totally need clean drinking water in school. My daughter experiences tummyaches when they drink the water in school.”

–Rosemarie Requitod-Jamilan, second grade student mother
The AquaTower will surely help the school - especially the students. There are days when they skip classes because of waterborne diseases.”
- Rea Caisip, sixth grade teacher